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SUBJECT: AMIS INVESTIGATION REPORT ON HASKANITA ATTACK

¶1. (SBU) Summary: An informal Ceasefire Commission (CFC) report on the Haskanita attack blames SLA/Unity and JEM for the unprovoked assault. Rebel superior firepower and AMIS poor readiness and communications capability contributed to the worst battlefield loss since the deployment of AMIS. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) AMIS Force Commander General Agwai set up an informal ceasefire commission (CFC) earlier this month to determine what happened in the September 29-30 attack on Haskanita. After reviewing AMIS intelligence and operations reports, the committee submitted a report to Agwai on October 15. The following summarizes key aspects of the report.

¶3. (SBU) In early summer 2007 the town of Haskanita was under the control of SLA/Minawi. In July Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) forces consisting of 84 armed vehicles moved south-east from Tine, Chad and attacked GOS and SLA/Unity positions in the Haskanita area. AMIS Military Group Site (MGS) Haskanita reported a tense and unpredictable security situation in the area due to the presence of the JEM rebels. On August 3 Mohammed Osman, the SLA/Minawi rep at MGS Haskanita, visited the camp to renounce his membership in SLA/Minawi and announced the emergence of SLA/Unity in partnership with JEM. Skirmishes between the rebels and GoS continued throughout the month.

¶4. (SBU) On August 27 JEM commander Mohammed "Abdulaziz" Nur Osher visited the MGS and said his forces were in charge of Haskanita. From the end of August through September 7, the GOS conducted air bombing raids on the JEM and SLA/Unity positions in and around Haskanita, in response to the rebel attack at Wad Banda in neighboring Kordofan which claimed 41 lives. Approximately 1,500 local civilians demonstrated at the MGS camp on September 6, complaining AMIS was not protecting them from the GOS attacks. The struggle between the GOS and the two rebel forces for control of Haskanita began September 10. On that day, JEM commander Nur Osher demanded the suspension of AMIS flights into the area and the eviction of the GOS representative, whom they accused of providing GOS pilots with coordinates of their positions. AMIS complied with the flight suspension request (through September 12 when it was lifted by the JEM commander) but did not evict the GOS rep. An AMIS re-supply flight did not land at Haskanita until September 16. On September 28, GOS forces dislodged JEM and SLA/Unity from their stronghold outside of Haskanita, forcing them to withdraw towards the village. The next day GOS planes bombed Haskanita.

¶5. (SBU) On September 29 at 1930, coinciding with the evening meal breaking the Ramadan fast, JEM and SLA/U forces attacked MGS Haskanita with approximately 30 vehicles. The attack was well-coordinated and targeted known gun positions, the radio room, Armored Personnel Carriers (APCs), and locations such as the mosque where the soldiers were concentrated. The radio room was destroyed in the first few minutes of the attack, cutting communication by HF radio. The attackers quickly gained possession of most of the hand-held radios. (The MGS had only one serviceable Thuraya in the

possession of the MilOb Ops Officer). Lacking communications equipment, the company commander lost contact with his soldiers, his battalion commander, and his Sector HQ. As AMIS soldiers tried to maneuver APCs into firing positions, the rebels attacked them with AA guns (12.5mm) at close range. A few AMIS soldiers grouped at the west end of the camp to offer resistance, but did not fire for fear of hitting MilObs, CIVPOL and other staff. The rebels started to leave the camp around 0400 on September 30 after removing weapons, ammunition, food, bedding, communications equipment, fuel and 17 vehicles. By 0730, villagers began looting the camp. GOS forces did not make contact with the camp until 1545 and the AMIS rescue team arrived at 1630.

¶16. (SBU) According to the commission's report, eyewitness accounts state the vehicles used by the rebels bore the JEM insignia. In addition, eyewitnesses are unanimous in claiming SLA (U) commander Mohammed Osman led the assault. The commission noted in its report that it was unable to determine the accuracy of allegations that locally-hired PAE staff aided the attackers.

¶17. (SBU) The report states the following conclusions:

- The probable purpose of the attack was for the rebels to replenish their depleted logistic stock after losing their Haskanita stronghold.
- The attack was led by Mohammed Osman of SLA/U.
- Vehicles used in the attack had the JEM insignia. Therefore it is highly probable JEM's commander authorized the attack.
- The Protection Force was taken by surprise leading to loss of command and control.
- The destruction of the radio room severed communications with the battalion commander and Sector headquarters.
- The loss of communication resulted in conflicting and unreliable information after the attack.

KHARTOUM 00001684 002 OF 002

¶18. (SBU) The report states the following lessons learned:

- AMIS camps and facilities are not insulated from attacks by parties to the Darfur conflict and need to be alert and prepared at all times.
- The rebels have superior weapons and fire power compared to the AMIS Protection Force. The strength and firepower capacities of the Protection Force need to be increased.
- The layout of AMIS camps is restrictive and compact with little or no room for tactical maneuver when under attack. It is impossible to defend the camp from within. Perimeter fencing should, therefore, limit intruders and provide fire positions within the outer perimeter.
- Accommodation of national staff, including party representatives, in AMIS camps negates all security considerations. They should stay outside the camps.
- AMIS communication assets are inadequate and ineffective. Better and more reliable communications are needed.
- Factions and persons indicted for ceasefire violations have never been sanctioned, encouraging recalcitrance on their part and imitation by others. Such people need to be brought to justice.

¶19. (SBU) Comment: While the report stresses the need for perpetrators of ceasefire violations to be brought to justice, there is not suggested consequence for the violation. This timidity on the part of the commission may well invite future attacks. AMIS troops' lack of preparedness and inability to defend themselves is also a major deficiency and is now the subject of an AMIS board of inquiry. The deployment of the UNAMID heavy package should improve the operational capacity of the peacekeepers on the ground in Darfur but that is only the beginning of having a substantive force with teeth that can at least defend itself.

FERNANDEZ